Canadian Centre
For Foreign Policy
Development

Centre canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

125 promenade Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2
Telephone/Téléphone : **613 944 8278** Fax/Télécopieur : **613 944 0687**
www.cfp-pec.gc.ca

101-00750/

STOP SWEATSHOPS: THE ROLE OF CANADIANS AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

September 1997

Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre

STOP SWEATSHOPS
Saturday, September 6, 1997
Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre
51 Stuart Street, Hamilton

Agenda

9:30 am	Welcome
9:45 am	Agenda Review
10:00 am	Panel Discussion: (1) Liona Rosa Lara, from La Zonera, Dominican Republic: *Building women's leadership in maquila organizing.* (2) Monica Felipe Alvarez, from STECAMOSA, Guatemala: *How Philips-van Heusen workers achieved a union contract.* (3) Hannah Frisch, from U.S.-Guatemala Labor Education Project, Chicago: *Strategies for successful North-South Alliances: The story of the Philips-van Heusen campaign* (4) Bob Jeffcott, from the Maquila Solidarity Network, Toronto: *Campaigns to stop sweatshops: the Woolworth story*
11:15 am	Coffee
11:30 am	Brief statement from Carmen Garcia from FESTRAS (Guatemala) Question period
12:00 pm	Lunch and leafletting at Northern Reflections store
1:30 pm	Small groups (1) Government policy (2) North-South alliances (including Latin American caucus) (3) Local organizing (two groups)
4:30 pm	Report back
4:50 pm	Sum-up and thank yous

REPORTS FROM SMALL GROUPS

(1) Government Policy

General issues:
-trade policy and labour rights
-access to information
-codes of conduct and independent monitoring
-child labour
-other legislation re corporate practices

Questions:
(1) How can we use trade policy to promote respect for labour rights, without being or appearing to be protectionist?
(2) What other governmental policies could be enacted to strengthen labour rights and hold apparel companies accountable for labour rights violations by their overseas contractors? What kind of access to information legislation should we be demanding?
(3) Should we call upon the Canadian government to initiate a process similar to the US Presidential Taskforce on Sweatshop Abuses? If so, what should be the mandate of such a process, who should be involved, and what would we want to achieve?

Task:
Develop three specific proposals to make to the government to address offshore sweatshop practices.

Participants:
Bunny Anger, Bob Parent, Gus Matiece, Kathryn Robertson, Peter Hutton, Harold Pickering, Mary Anne Peters (facilitator), Joan Atlin (resource person)

Proposals/ideas:

Use labour side agreement of NAFTA to bring complaints. This hasn't been done much in Canada, but it has been done in the US.

Trade agreements need to include other principles besides economy. There is a lack of agreement on social clauses in trade agreements; unions, non-governmental organizations and governments in the South are afraid that social clauses will be used as another form of protectionism. Therefore, there is a need for democratic and transparent mechanisms for enforcing social agreements so that they are not as likely to be used to penalize certain countries.

Workers and unions in the South are asking people in the North to support them by pressuring their governments to respect and enforce existing labour laws.

Voluntary codes of conduct are inadequate. Governments (North and South) should be living up to their responsibilities for protecting workers and enforcing labour and human rights standards.

Development pacts: include labour rights goals in development aid that apply to Canada as well as to recipient country.

Joint liability: make Canadian corporations legally responsible for the labour rights violations of their contractors and sub-contractors. Enable prosecution of companies in Canada for violations overseas.

Include registration numbers on garment tags so that Canadians can trace production. Every garment tag has a CA number that enables consumers or consumer advocates to trace the company which takes responsibility for the fibre content listed on the tag. There should be a similar system allowing Canadians to find out where and by whom the garment was made, to facilitate the protection of workers, not just consumers.

Improve access to information so that Canadians can find out where retailers produce (countries, contractors, sub-contractors and factories).

Improve access to information so that Canadian consumers can find out who owns stores. Require the store to show the parent company name on its sign (eg. Northern Reflections--a division of Woolworths).

Make the new code of international business conduct (drawn up by a coalition led by Canadian Occidental Petroleum) mandatory for Canadian Crown corporations (such as the Canadian Export Development Corporation) and for corporations that receive CIDA and Canadian Export Development Corporation assistance.

Initiate a Canadian process similar to the US Presidential Taskforce on Sweatshop Abuses, with stronger representation of unions and non-governmental organizations so that the agreement goes farther to protect workers, and give it the resources and power for monitoring and enforcement of the agreement.

(2) North-South Alliances

General issues:
- new organizing strategies
- issues of women and youth
- retailers (campaigns in North) and contractors (organizing in South)
- North-South communication, coordination and decision-making

Questions:
(1) What strategic lessons can be drawn from the successful organizing effort at Phillips-van Huesen in Guatemala and the achievement of independent monitoring at Mandarin International in El Salvador?
(2) What new organizing strategies are needed in maquilas to address the specific issues of women and youth?
(3) What issues need to be addressed and principles established to improve North-South campaigns linking pressure on retailers with organizing in the South?

Task:
Develop three specific proposals to improve North-South collaboration on anti-sweatshop campaigns.

Participants:
Latin American caucus: Monica Felipe Alvarez, Liona Rosa Lara, Fredy Pineda, Carmen Garcia, Vicky Villanueva, Miguel Cifuentes, Juan Rivas, Sandra Lemus (facilitator)
Canadian/U.S. caucus: Tanya Roberts-Davis, Annie Labaj, Linda Bowron, Genny Santos, Serena Nadir, Chris Mazur, Tanya Sweers, Pat McNeice, Paul Lemieux (facilitator), Hannah Frisch (resource person)

Proposals/ideas:

Groups in the South need funds to hire workers and enable communication.

Watchdog committee to investigate maquilas.

Resources to do corporate research to trace labels: need to be careful of risks to workers.

Positive labels (eg. No Sweat label)--must be careful because of risk of abuse.

Independent monitoring that protects workers.

Follow up to workshop.

Keep connection to speakers.

Resources to enable communication between Dominican Republic and Guatemala.

Resources to hire full-time organizers in South.

Organizations should be more specific.

Latin Americans need information on what we are doing in Canada.

(3) Local organizing

General issues:
-pressure on retailers
-corporate sponsorships
-involving community
-coordination and planning (local, regional, national)

Participants:
A: Shari Scandlan, Barbara Paleczny, Jake Stott, Marisa Kaczmarzcyk, Joanne Murphy, Rex Barger, Sue Markey, Musonda Kidd (resource person/facilitator)
B: Diane Baltaz, Chrystal Towler, Helen Geagan, Leny Holierhoek, Christine McCardell, Janice Brown, Murray Beech, Bob Jeffcott (resource person/facilitator)

Ideas for local actions:

Leafletting, fashion shows, education, leaflets in pockets of clothes at retailers.

Code of conduct for all of us.

Development and Peace distributed 147,000 of its Nike and Levis postcards nationally; the Hamilton and St. Catharines dioceses published petitions in the newspapers. Nike responded to every Catholic high school, parish and everyone who signed.

Shoes being returned to Nike Town.

Socially responsible investing--organizations such as religious orders become shareholders of corporations and press issues such as labour standards.

Presentations for schools, churches, community groups, youth groups

Letter-writing: make it a project for English classes and schools.

"Just Fashion" show for schools, community and group meetings: focus on child labour.

Label research: Have school groups visit malls. Where are clothes from? Who is the importer? Who is the manufacturer? Use CA number on label and phone to get information. Older students (ie. OAC) and adult groups can use annual reports of corporations for research, to find out who owns what and where. Annual reports of public companies are available for free, and may be in the public library.

Mall tour and presentations in front of stores ("sweatshop shopping tour").

Organizing against corporate sponsorship in schools.

Knowing what questions to ask in stores or of companies: How do you know about conditions? Do you have a code of conduct? How is it monitored? Do you have a list of contractors?

Policies for bulk purchases for schools--involving students in research.

Caution re using/abusing logos.

Highlight positive examples, expand fair trade, start with Bridgehead.

Getting young people together to buy and return as a group (but concern re adding to exploitation of clerks).

Balloons, clowns, singing in malls.

Shopping bags with "no sweatshop" messages (UNITE has produced some).

Stickers, messages in pockets.

Union labour t-shirts with information (eg. "not sweatshop labour").

Define the goal for your action: is it for personal interaction (one-on-one communication) or loud statement, such as a group getting kicked out of the mall

Coordination:
Coordination among community centres, unions, churches, youth groups.
need resources--keep contact through newsletters and phone calls.
workshops and seminars
fax, e-mail and internet
Up-to-date database/contact list of what groups are doing, what speakers are available, video materials (especially those that provide context and have Canadian content) and other resources.
positive examples of change

Transcript of presentations given at *Stop Sweatshops*, Saturday, September 6, 1997 at the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre

Liona Rosa Lara
Organizer with La Zonera, Dominican Republic

1994, I participated in an investigation, interviewing workers in free trade zones in the Santo Domingo area, asking them about working conditions and salaries. They didn't know much about their rights as workers, or their human rights generally. They were working anywhere from 8 to 14 hours a day. The minimum wage is 390 pesos a week as a base salary, and with piece work bonuses, this could go up to 600 pesos. From there you have to take off 40 pesos per week for food, 10 pesos for social security. They have to work obligatory overtime. They have a hard time getting permission to go to the doctor, or to take a sick child, and if they do go, their salary is docked. 80% of the workers in Dominican Republic (DR) maquilas are women. They work in different kinds of factories, making pants, shirts, brassieres and other clothing which is not sold in our country. The owners of the factories are Korean, Canadians, Puerto Ricans and other foreigners. There are 468 free trade zones in the DR.

When we work with the women, we don't talk specifically about unions, because the workers are afraid. Even if they're seen to be moving around a lot in the zones, they are fired. What we do are workshops about their rights under the labour code, self-esteem and leadership. Even though many of the women live in the same neighbourhoods and work in the free trade zones, they didn't know each other, so the workshops are an opportunity to get to know each other.

There are two shifts: the women who go in at 7 and come out at 4, and the women who go in at 8 and come out at 5, if they're not working overtime. The amount of time people get to eat varies: in some places 15 minutes, in other places half an hour. They can't ask to go to the washroom too often, and if they spend too long in the washroom, someone knocks on the door. Almost all of the supervisors are men.

We are also working on the issue of codes of conduct. In March we had a workshop with groups from England, Cuba and Honduras to learn about codes of conduct, or codes of ethics as they are sometimes called. The Gap, for instance, has a code of conduct, and the code of conduct is something that their contractors are supposed to be following. I think it's really important that we work to ensure the code of conduct is respected. We say work, yes, jobs, yes, but jobs with dignity. We are human beings, and we are women. We are the majority of the population and the majority of those who produce. We not only produce in the economy, we produce children, we do the dishes, we do the housework, we produce in every sense. Something that I've seen since I've been doing this work, is that in some ways, women are weaker, in the sense that, because of the necessity that we have for the work, women are submitting to bad conditions that men might not. They can get up and leave this job, but women can't, because they have children and families to support. So they submit.

I think that it's important that we make the effort. When we started, we started from nothing, and now we're working with 136 women in our group. We are able to support them if a woman is fired and doesn't get her severance, we have a lawyer who works with us and can make sure she gets the money she's owed. We also have a human rights committee that supports us in that part of the work, and also a psychologist who works with us. We are working by neighbourhood, forming "nucleos", small groups that women in each street form.

Monica Felipe Alvarez
Secretary-General, STECAMOSA

Thank you to everyone. I am very happy to be here today. I also want to thank you for the support we received from various organizations, because without that support, what I'm going to tell you today wouldn't have been possible. Thank you for the support, and for the fact that you have been keeping up with what has been happening at CAMOSA, at the factory. On my own behalf, and on behalf of my compañeras, I want to thank you for the support you have given us in the path that we have been able to open, a path of dignity.

The organizing and re-organizing process in CAMOSA was a difficult one and it took a long time. I'm going to tell you the story of how we re-organized STECAMOSA. We asked for support, for help, in organizing more members into the union, because the company had used many tactics to break the union. In April of 1996, the help that we had asked for arrived in the form of Teresa Cassertano, a compañera who came to help us in the re-organizing of STECAMOSA. The first thing that she did was to run a seminar with us to bring out new organizers. From that process two new organizers arose. The first thing that we did was to create a map of the factory. The next step was to figure out how we were going to get names and addresses of workers in the factory in a secret way so the company wouldn't know what we were doing. We started meeting on Friday afternoons, when we got off a little earlier, at 3:30, at first three or four of us, and as time went on, the group grew until we had a group of about 20 workers. In those meetings, we discussed how we were going to go about getting the names of other workers, and the idea that we came up with was to do a raffle. The raffle worked very well. The selling of raffle tickets allowed us to collect the names and addresses of many workers, which allowed us to go ahead. Because we knew that the company had a lot of different tactics for firing workers involved in organizing processes, what we recommended to the compañeras was that this had to stay secret, that we couldn't talk about this to anyone else. We all wanted to see change. We all wanted a collective agreement, so we all collaborated in this agreement to keep it quiet. We did a whole series of visits to the workers' homes, where each person brought forward her ideas for what she wanted to see in a collective agreement. That's how we went about finishing the list of proposals that we wanted for our collective agreement, and also completing the process of affiliating the members. One Saturday and Sunday, we went out and finished the visits. On the Sunday, we held a General Assembly so that the proposals for the collective agreement could be approved by the members.

The other plan was that we had prepared t-shirts for the day on which we were going to deliver to the company and the Ministry of Labour our notice to bargain; we had prepared t-shirts to go in wearing on that Monday. The company was very surprised on that Monday when most of us went in wearing our t-shirts. They weren't expecting that, but they said, "well, it's just a t-shirt." So they were just looking at us, watching us, and wondering, but we just walked in wearing them and worked the whole day, because that was what we had agreed to do. We would just go in and be calm. We asked two people to go with us as witnesses when we delivered our proposals, both to the company and to the Ministry of Labour, so that they couldn't deny that they had received them. We presented this to them at about 10:00 am in their office, and about half an hour later they called us back in and returned the proposals to us, saying they didn't know anything about it. We told them that our intention was to deliver these documents to them so that they would know that we had delivered the documents to them and to the Ministry of Labour. They put the documents in an envelope and they gave them back to us. We took them, but we said: "fine, but we have already delivered those documents, and that's what we need you to know."

And then a whole other discussion started, because they didn't want to accept that we had the 25% membership we needed to oblige them to bargain. They had fought us to stop us from getting that 25%, because they knew that once we had it, they would be obliged to negotiate. It was a very long process after we had delivered the proposals. There were a lot of reprisals against the workers. The company said: "there's no work for you. You can sit and sleep at your machine if you want to, but there's no work." They said we were lying to our membership, that we didn't have that requirement, and a whole series of other things. That's why I said earlier that if it hadn't been for the support from you and others in the United States, the collective agreement wouldn't have been possible. What made it possible was the coordination we had through a compañero named Rhett [Rhett Doumitt of the U.S.-Guatemala Labor Education Project], who was working with us in Guatemala, who coordinated all of the actions, so that they knew when we were going to deliver the documents and at that same time they could do solidarity actions in other places. I say again that without all of that help, it wouldn't have been possible. I say that on behalf of myself and all of the members of the union. We wouldn't have gotten where we got without outside help. It was a long and difficult process after we delivered our proposals to actually get to our collective agreement. Bruce Klatsky, the CEO of the company, who is on the board of directors of Human Rights Watch, flew to Guatemala and said, "yes, there's a union here, and we're going to negotiate, but I want you to know that you'll be treated equally whether you're affiliated to the union or not affiliated to the union, you'll receive the same treatment from the company." We were very glad that he came and that he said they were going to negotiate, but we were disturbed that he said that rights would be the same for those that had organized and become part of the union and for those who hadn't. For us that was a negative point. Also, it created a lot of confusion for the workers, because they were wondering why to join the union if they would have the same rights as someone who didn't. We've tried to clarify that. Of course, the collective agreement says that it covers all of the workers in the plant, but in terms of the support

from the union when there are problems, that will be different. So we have to clarify who are affiliates of the union and who are not, since that's been a point of confusion, and a tactic that the company has used. These are just a few of the details of our struggle, since it has been a very long story, it's been a six year struggle, but it's been worthwhile

Hannah Frisch
U.S.-Guatemala Labor Education Project

I'm going to talk about the same story, but with the view from Chicago. The Guatemala Labor Project was the organization that coordinated the international solidarity and we had a full-time staff person, Rhett, who Monica referred to, who was based in Guatemala City, and who was an essential link of communication between the people in the union and our office, and through us, the people in North America. This was a really different kind of solidarity action, for us and for the solidarity movement, because we've always had urgent action alerts that we respond to, like when somebody gets fired, and we protest and write letters and so on, but this was very different, because it was long in the planning, and it was cooperative planning between people in the North and people in the South. It was very closely coordinated. There was a period, that Monica referred to, when the organizing was clandestine, and it was an offensive campaign, not just a defensive campaign. Organizing in the maquilas is extremely difficult. It's difficult everywhere, but opposition to organizing in the maquilas is very fierce, so that there were many factors that went into this victory. I think that if it hadn't been for every single aspect, the victory wouldn't have been won. First and foremost, of course, was the determination and tenacity of the workers, who hung in there, even though their salaries, which weren't enough to live on in the first place, were cut in half or in quarter. I don't know how they managed to hold on so long.

Some of the other things were the technical and financial assistance provided by international labour organizations and unions. Teresa Cassertano, who was the technical advisor, her salary was paid by the international federation of textile labourers, and also the federation paid for the salaries of the organizers. It's a new thing in Guatemala to have paid, salaried organizers, but in this kind of situation, I don't know if the campaign could have been won without it.

Another contribution to the victory was being able to involve major media. Ultimately, the Wall Street Journal ran stories on this campaign. This was extremely important in pressuring the CEO to come to the bargaining table. We had a whole campaign following around Bruce Klatsky. When he had a meeting in Maine, there were protesters about this, and since he had socially responsible pretensions, he was a very good target. We leafleted a meeting he attended in Washington. He was going to be the main speaker at a Human Rights Watch event, and we threatened to picket them, and there came to be an agreement with Human Rights Watch, that Human Rights Watch would send down monitors to check on discrimination against the union people and whether they really had 25% of the workforce. That led to the Wall Street Journal story that Human Rights Watch says that Bruce Klatsky isn't quite so good a guy as he says he is.

Another aspect of the campaign was the pressure on the Guatemalan government because of U.S. trade benefits. Our organization has been involved in trying to get the laws that we have about trade benefits enforced. U.S. tariff regulations say that a country can get special benefits only if they treat their workers right. U.S.-GLEP helped get Guatemala on trade probation. This was very important in the PVH campaign at certain points, because the Labour Minister, who could have explicitly ruled that the union didn't have 25%, was neutralized, in that he was just trying to back out of the situation and not get in trouble on either side, because of the pressure on the government.

Guatemalan unions were very important. FESTRAS was one of the unions that gave the STECAMOSA workers the most support. When I was down there on a delegation and we had a rally outside the plant, people from the Coca Cola workers came with a band to support them, and they did this many times. U.S. unions were involved in support. A women's network that I belong to called STITCH went down on a delegation and was beginning to involve women's groups in supporting the union. People all over the U.S. and some in Canada leafleted and wrote letters. At a certain point, socially responsible investment groups got involved. The negotiation of the contract was very long and difficult, and the company was wanting to give the union nothing at all; in fact it was wanting to discredit the union by giving lower raises than they would have had anyway, and the socially responsible investment groups put pressure on the company, as did U.S. unions, and helped to win a decent contract.

U.S.-GLEP was also involved in doing research. We turned up a PVH contractor in a little village outside of Guatemala City where child labour was being used, and even though this didn't come into the campaign directly, it helped us interest the people from the Wall Street Journal in doing a story on PVH and following it up.

So, all of these things came together and as I said, I don't think the victory could have happened without everybody. We have a victory now, but there are still important questions, like: Can this victory be sustained? PVH itself is now going to be under pressure from powers that don't want to see unions in the maquila sector. No doubt, what they would really like to do is close the factory in Guatemala, and it's up to us in solidarity to let them know that there will be tremendous costs in public relations if they do that. And there is the question: Can this victory be spread? There were many unique aspects of the PVH situation. This was a factory that was owned by a U.S. owner. If it had just been a contractor, it would have been more difficult. The socially responsible pretensions of the CEO. The accident of Human Rights Watch being involved. All of these things were important. We have to be sure that we target carefully the next time, so that we can be sure we can have a victory, so that there will be not just this one union contract in the maquila sector, but that there can be many union contracts.

The communication between the union and international solidarity has been critical. I don't know how it could have been maintained without a staff person at the national level being there in Guatemala the whole time. It's very critical, because international solidarity

can be a risk to workers who are trying to organize, and not a benefit, in the sense that they risk job loss if their company loses contracts, they risk being defamed by the company and the government for being in collusion with people who want to take jobs out of Guatemala, so it's very important that the people who are really taking the risks with their lives agree that they really want to take these risks by having international solidarity and support. Obviously, it helps people in the North avoid mistakes, it permits international solidarity to respond promptly when there are reprisals and actions of discrimination against the workers. For example, the company falsely accused a union activist of stealing, and we were able to get on that right away, because we were a phone call away from our staff person in Guatemala. It was important for us to have regular information so we could get out reports to the grassroots, and this keeps people motivated, to know what is going on in the campaign. Lastly, this sort of back-and-forth communication is very important because sometimes the international solidarity movement needs things from the workers movement in Guatemala. For example, suppose the company did something egregious, and there's a legal mechanism to complain about it that the workers know is useless, that the legal complaints get filed in the wastebasket. It's possible that we in international solidarity need to ask the workers to do it anyway, because it's possible that our work can be discredited if the company says, "hey, the workers didn't even complain."

Let me just conclude by talking about my special love, the grassroots organizing, which is the work that I have been doing, thinking about how we can make our grassroots leafleting more powerful and more effective than it already is. Letters to companies are very important, and it occurs to me that we can not just pass out flyers saying write a letter, but that we could collect short letters on the spot. People could write a line or two, and then we could put it in an envelope and mail it for them. Probably the most important thing that we as local activists can do to increase the power of our work is to get our local media involved. Sometimes you can't get the metropolitan newspaper of a large city to cover you, but you can find a local angle for a neighbourhood paper or a college paper, and it's valuable to get these little media things, not just the big ones, and the little media can lead to the big ones. There are also infinite possibilities for expanding and broadening the participation. We had about 30 different cities in North America leafleting on the PVH campaign, and we could have many more cities, and many more sites within cities, and many more constituencies involved in doing things. There's also a question of intensity of the tactics. U.S.-GLEP doesn't promote tactics more intense than leafleting, but other groups...

[end of tape]

...malls. There are three incidents of people in the U.S. who were able to do things to get around the problem. In Colorado, a group confronted the situation. When a store manager said: "You have to leave," they said "no, it's our free speech right to be here," and so the store manager called mall security, and when mall security asked them to leave, they said again, "we have a right to be here and pass out leaflets because of free speech," so mall security called the police. When the police came, they said, "Well, yes, we just called the

State's Attorney, and the State's Attorney said they have the right to be here." So, how it would play out in different situations, we don't know, but in Colorado it worked.

Another kind of tactic was done in Cleveland with creative stealth. They had the Sweatgear catalogue, with the PVH leaflet inside, and they went around saying, "Would you like this catalogue for the Christmas season? Read it when you get home." This was accompanied by a moving, 2-3 minute Sweatgear fashion show, with an announcer and two models wearing Sweatgear made by PVH,, which would change locations whenever they said a code word, and they managed to evade mall security for quite a while doing this. Lastly, in Pittsburgh, they were being kicked out of malls. They could have had t-shirts made up, but t-shirts are kind of expensive, so they made up these stickers, and mall security couldn't get them because it was something worn on their person.

I'm sure we'll be able to talk more later about all of the things we can do. I want to conclude by saluting the workers of Guatemala, and the workers of STECAMOSA, who have won this victory for themselves and for all of us.

Bob Jeffcott
Maquila Solidarity Network and the Labour Behind the Label Coalition

I am going to focus particularly on the Woolworth-Northern campaign, in which I hope all of you will join us at noontime, when we go into a mall here in Hamilton. First, though, I should say that I'm not a real expert on the Canadian garment industry. I don't pretend to be an expert. There are other people here who know a lot more than I do. There are two workers here who are members of UNITE, who know I know a great deal, I'm sure, about the garment industry. There are people here who have been involved with working with homeworkers over the years. Joan Atlin, who is one of the translators, was working with homeworkers in Toronto. Vicky Villanueva has also been doing work with homeworkers in Toronto. Barbara Paleczny, who is here, is a member of our coalition, was working with an earlier coalition that was specifically working with homeworkers. There are a lot of people here who have that experience. I'm going to focus on the specific campaign that I have been involved in, through the Maquila Solidarity Network, and formerly through the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice. The other thing I should mention is just about campaigns. We're not the only ones doing these campaigns. Development and Peace, for instance, and Paul [Lemieux] is in the back of the room over here, has done tremendous work on consumer campaigns related to Nike, and they were able to get 147,000 postcards sent to Nike just in the last year, calling for independent monitoring and a living wage. There are a lot of people who have experience in this room.

I want to say a little bit about the situation of women producing for the Woolworth-Northern group in Toronto, Canada. We usually think that sweatshop conditions only exist in countries like Guatemala, or Asia, or the Caribbean. When I first got involved in this work I, too, had the assumption that the changes in the garment industry meant that we were losing jobs and they were gaining jobs. That is not the reality. What is happening is that good-paying, unionized jobs in factories, that are paying at least the legal standard

in benefits, hours of work and salaries, those jobs are being lost. What is being created here in Canada is a growing sector of women workers who are working both in their homes and in small contracting shops that we call sweatshops. When we began this campaign over a year ago, some of us had been involved in a campaign focusing on the Gap, and its practices, through its contractors and sub-contractors in El Salvador. It was a successful campaign. We won independent monitoring in that particular factory in El Salvador by local human rights and church organizations. Some of us got together and said, can't we apply some of the same lessons to our own country, because we have sweatshop conditions here in Canada as well. The first thing we did was talk to the Homeworkers Association, which is affiliated with UNITE in Toronto, and this is an association, not a union, of homeworkers, of women who sew for some major labels and major retailers in their homes. They did some research for us. This is an important point for us in campaigns: to have relationships with the workers involved, and have their say-so, their agreement, about what we're doing. They did some of their own research, talked to their own members about who are the worst labels, the worst retailers, that they sew. Many of the women said that the lowest piece rates that they were getting was, what they said were the "two ducks on a label", which actually is the two loons on the Northern Reflections label. The homeworkers did more interviews with these people, and found out many things such as that many women were getting as low as $4.50 an hour. They were getting piece rates, but if you add up your piece rates with the time it takes to do the work, they were getting the equivalent of $4.50 an hour, 65% of the minimum wage in Ontario. Homeworkers in Ontario are entitled, by law, to 10% more than minimum wage to cover their overhead costs. They also talked about people working as long as 12 hours a day with no overtime pay. People not getting statutory benefits they're entitled to by law, benefits such as vacation pay, statutory holidays, their employers don't pay into unemployment insurance or Canada Pension Plan. We also found out that not just homeworkers, but also contract shop employees, face some of the same conditions. Contract shop employees are people working in a small factory, where there might be 10, 15, 20 sewing machines in the sub-contractor's workshop. And some of these people were also receiving as little as $4.50 an hour, working as much as 12 hours a day with no overtime pay, not receiving other legal benefits they're entitled to, like statutory holidays and other such things. Their employer treats them and calls them independent contractors; as independent contractors they say that they're not entitled to the employer putting in contributions to the Canada Pension Plan, or putting contributions into unemployment insurance.

These are the kind of abuses we see in metropolitan Toronto. They're not as severe as the kind of abuses we see in a place like Guatemala, but they're serious violations of labour standards, labour rights and the law. What we're seeing in Ontario now is a process of deregulation by the provincial government and cutting back on the number of inspectors who can ferret out these kinds of practices. So, anyway, what we did with this case was first, as a coalition, wrote a letter to the Woolworth-Northern group and sent it to them. At that point, I should tell you, we didn't even know that Northern Reflections, Northern Traditions, Northern Getaway were owned by Woolworth's. We thought they were a nice, pure little Canadian retailer. Then we found out that they're all owned by this big,

multinational Woolworth corporation. We didn't realize they also own FootLocker, which is the largest seller of Nike products in North America. We didn't realize we were dealing with a big company, but we were. When we started this campaign we sent that letter to Woolworth's, and we got no reply, none whatsoever. All we were requesting was an opportunity to meet with them, to discuss these problems, and to find ways to resolve them. Then, during the provincial hearings to changes to the Employment Standards Act, which are the basic rights that all workers have, during those hearings, some members of the Homeworkers Association and some members of UNITE staged a Sweatshop Fashion Show during the hearings. At those hearings, you're not supposed to do that. You're only supposed to speak; you're not supposed to do anything demonstrative. They came up, they did a fashion show, one of the leaders of the union announced what clothes they were wearing, how much they were paid to sew the clothes, and how much you pay for them in the stores, and the women wore the clothes with stickers that say how much they were paid to make them and how much you pay in the store, and there was a big picture in the Toronto Star. Two weeks later the company phones us: "Can we have a meeting?" So we had a meeting with them, and we discussed the situation and what we can do about it. We said, first of all, "we know that these conditions exist in five contractors, and we know there are probably more of them. How about we go together to the Ministry of Labour and ask for an audit of the practices of all of your contractors in metro Toronto." No, they weren't interested. "How about you share information with us about who your contractors are and we'll share information with you about what the violations are." No, they weren't interested in that. Finally, we got them to agree that they would carry out an investigation themselves, they would report back to us on the results of the investigation before taking any action, and we sent them letters and talked to them many times saying to them: "We want you to do nothing that will in any way jeopardize the employment of the affected women." They also agreed that they would meet with some of the women directly and hear their stories. So the homeworkers, courageously, because they're afraid of losing their employment, met with the company, not their own employer, the subcontractor, but with the retailer directly, and we were almost at the point where we were in a process of negotiations. So it's interesting. We're going to the retailer directly. We're bypassing all of the middle layers. And the retailer in this case heard the story and said yes, they would carry out the investigation.

They did the investigation, but we didn't wait for the results. We've actually had a number of different actions since then. For instance, at Christmas time, (we didn't get a lot of media for this one but we should have), we had a sweatshop shopping tour of the Eaton Centre, where we invited the media to accompany us through the Eaton Centre, and we would stop at each store where clothes are produced under sweatshop conditions, and we would talk about that. We had some coverage actually from a Hamilton television station. Other TV stations were afraid to go into the mall, because they said they would be thrown out, that their cameras would be thrown out. Of course, the cameras were thrown out, we were thrown out, everybody was thrown out, but we very quickly went from one store to another. We did about four, and I think we actually got to a store selling Nike products, where someone from Development and Peace was ready to talk about it, and that's when we were all hustled out of the mall by security guards. We did it in front of the mall, the

rest of the thing. So there are many creative things you can do, and Hannah has given us some new ideas, which are wonderful. But anyway, the company carries out its investigation, and comes back to us and -- I forgot to say earlier, but we only gave them the names of two sub-contractors, because we wanted to test their sincerity -- they checked those out and said: "One of them we're no longer dealing with, and the other one we're not going to place any future orders with." And what was the result? What did they discover? They're not going to tell us what they discovered. They wouldn't make that information public. They wouldn't even share it with us as to what were the violations. Nor would they take responsibility for the violations. They would not compensate the workers whose rights had been violated, which we had requested as well. We were very dissatisfied with that answer; what it means really is that it jeopardizes more the workers' employment, rather than protecting it, so we've had discussions with the homeworkers, and we've decided that in the back-to-school time leading up to Christmas, we're going to heighten the campaign and put more pressure on Woolworth's on this particular issue.

Now, there's some things I can't really talk about right now, because there are some things that we've discovered recently that we're sitting on for the moment, but I can at least tell you that there are some questions about what Woolworth's had done in its investigation, and there are also some questions about the contractor they spoke of, and we've actually been able to intervene to try to make sure that the contractor will improve its practices and get some contracts from other retailers. We're actually doing something to preserve people's employment, rather than jeopardizing it.

I think some of the points about this are that first of all, we can't just talk about what's happening in other countries; we have the problem here in Canada and it's getting worse. I was recently out in Vancouver and I read an article there where -- Vancouver doesn't have nearly the size of the garment industry that we have, but they do have growing homework. We have probably 5000 or more homeworkers in Toronto, and we don't know how many people are working for these small, fly-by-night sweatshops, sub-contracting shops. It's a growing phenomenon, but we don't even have enough research to know what the numbers are. We know that it's spreading in parts of the city like Scarborough, but we don't know the numbers. Recently, a woman from the University of British Columbia did research with 70 homeworkers in Vancouver, interviews with them about their working conditions, and not one of them was receiving the minimum wage, not one of the 70 she interviewed. Similar kinds of interviews done a few years back in Toronto showed that these kinds of abuses are widespread, they are the norm, not the exception. It's a serious problem, it's a growing problem, and we have to do something about it.

As we talk about how difficult it is to organize in the maquilas, it's extremely difficult to organize when you have ten workers working here for one sub-contractor, 20 over here, 15 over here. There's a whole system of contracting and sub-contracting, so that we talk about a pyramid-shaped structure of production with the retailer at the top, and the retailer determines the price of production and the turn-around time for production, so they're the ones setting the terms of production. Below that you have the jobber, who

does nothing more than sub-contract out to others. Below that you have a factory that does some cutting, maybe some sewing, and sub-contracts out to sub-contractors and homeworkers, and maybe even the sub-contractor will sub-sub-contract out to homeworkers, and each one of those layers takes its cut of the price that's being paid, so the workers get less and less as you go down the pyramid. We found some instances of people making $2.50 an hour. This is a serious problem, and it erodes the rights of people still working in some of the unionized factories; it threatens their ability to negotiate. Just as the situation in other countries affects us, we see a spiraling downwards, a competition between workers North and South, East and West, over who's going to get the jobs. If you're going to get the jobs, you've got to say, "We're going to work for less, we're going to accept poorer conditions, and we're going to accept less than what we're legally entitled to." What can we do about it? We think we can create campaigns about problems here in Canada and in other countries where we target the retailers, and where we work with people who are organizing in factories and with homeworkers, in alliance with those of us who are targeting the retailers. Through those kinds of campaigns, we think we can influence standards. We think we can push for things like changes in legislation, to hold retailers jointly legally accountable for the practices of their sub-contractors. We think we can fight for things like some kind of industry-wide code of conduct which has some regulations in it, some teeth in it, about off-shore production as well. I don't want to go on any longer, but that's what we're trying to do here, and we're inviting you to join us at noon to talk to this particular store.

I would also like to say that the work in Guatemala has been an inspiration. The work in El Salvador has been an inspiration. The work around the Nike campaign has been an inspiration. In this case we are learning from Third World workers about how to conduct campaigns, and for that I thank you.

Stop Sweatshops
September 6, 1997 at the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre
Workshop Participants

Bunny Anger
UNITE
366 Stone Road, U#91
Welland, ON L3C 7A9

Joan Atlin
145 Beaconsfield Ave.
Toronto, ON M6J 3J5

Diane Baltaz
Social Awareness Office
700 King St. W.
Hamilton, ON L8P 1C7

Rex Barger
1749 Hwy 6
RR #2
Hamilton, ON L8N 2Z7

Murray Beech
189 Duke Street
Hamilton, ON L8P 4V4

Linda Bowron
Development and Peace
17 Pancake Lane
Fonthill, ON L0S 1E2

Janice Brown
RR #1
Thomasburg, ON K0K 3H0

Miguel Cifuentes
161 Maplewood Ave.
Toronto, ON M6C 1J8

Pierre Cuschieri
122 Macintosh Dr.
Stoney Creek, ON L8E 4E3

Josie D'Amico
270 Mohawk Rd. E., Apt. #412
Hamilton, ON L9H 2H9

Monica Felipe Alvarez
STECAMOSA
c/o CAMOSA
36 Calle 19-47
Zona 2
Guatemala, Guatemala

Hannah Frisch
U.S.-Guatemala Labor Education Project
P.O. Box 268-290
Chicago, IL 60626
USA

Carmen Garcia Hernandez
FESTRAS
6 av. 15-41 zona 1
4to nivel, Oficina No. 6
Guatemala, Guatemala

Helen Geagan
144 Melville Street
Dundas, ON L9H 2A5

Daina Greene
Steelworkers Humanity Fund
234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 700
Toronto, ON M4P 1K7

Leny Holierhoek
5 Glen Ave.
St. Catharines, ON L2S 1L2

Thelma Hooper
2940 Sycamore Street
Oakville, ON L6J 7H8

Peter Hutton
SHAIR
255 West Ave. N.
Hamilton, ON L8L 5C8

Bob Jeffcott
Maquila Solidarity Network
606 Shaw Street
Toronto, ON M6G 3L6

Marisa Kaczmarczyk
Kawartha World Issues Centre
180 Barnardo Ave.
Peterborough, ON K9H 5V3

Musonda Kidd
Maquila Solidarity Network
606 Shaw Street
Toronto, ON M6G 3L6

Annie Labaj
CAW Social Justice Fund
205 Placer Court
North York, ON M2H 3H9

Paul Lemieux
Canadian Catholic Organization for
Development and Peace
64 Barclay
Hamilton, ON L8S 1P4

Sandra Lemus
64 Barclay
Hamilton, ON L8S 1P4

Wayne Lewchuk
Labour Studies, McMaster University
39 Flatt Ave.
Hamilton, ON L8P 4M9

Murray Lumley
178 Orchard Dr.
Ancaster, ON L9G 1Z9

Sue Markey
72 West Avenue South, Apt. 2
Hamilton, ON L8N 2S3

Gus Matiece
225 Albany Ave.
Toronto, ON M5R 3C7

Chris Mazur
101 Main St. E.
Grimsby, ON L3M 1N6

Christine McCardell
879 Fennell Ave.
Hamilton, ON L8V 1W3

Pat McNeice
49 Tally Ho Drive
Dundas, ON L9H 3N1

Joanne Murphy
30 Regent Ave. #42
Hamilton, ON L9B 1B3

Anna Muto
5 Elm Ave, Apt. 109
Toronto, ON M5W 1N1

Serena Nadir
1 Sullivan Street
Toronto, ON M5T 1B8

Barbara Paleczny
390 Queen's Quay W. #403
Toronto, ON M5V 3A6

Bob Parent
153 Gadsby Ave.
Welland, ON L3C 1B1

Mary Anne Peters
84 Best Avenue
Dundas, ON L9H 5W5

Harold Pickering
CUSO
14 Chestnut Street
Kingston, ON K7K 3X3

Fredy Pineda Mejia
FESTRAS
6 av. 15-41 zona 1
4to nivel, Oficina No. 6
Guatemala, Guatemala

Juan Rivas
Dominican Republic Faith Experience Group
c/o Josie D'Amico
270 Mohawk Rd. E., Apt. #412
Hamilton, ON L9H 2H9

Tanya Roberts-Davis
Free the Children
9 Neville Park Blvd.
Toronto, ON M4E 3P5

Kathryn Robertson
Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice
77 Charles Street West, Suite 402
Toronto, ON M5R 2L9

Liona Rosa Lara
Dominican Republic Faith Experience Group
c/o Josie D'Amico
270 Mohawk Rd. E., Apt. #412
Hamilton, ON L9H 2H9

Genny Santos
OPIRG
455 Spadina Ave.
Toronto, ON M5S 2G8

Shari Scandlan
UNITE
146 Maplewood Ave
Hamilton, ON L8M 1X4

Jake Stott
205 Hwy #8, Box 90
West Flamborough, ON L9H 5E1

Tanya Sweers
123 MacNab St. S., Apt. #7
Hamilton, ON L8P 3C2

Chrystal Towler
602 Baron's Court
Burlington, ON L7R 4E4

John Vedell
647 York Road
Dundas, ON L9H 5Z6

Vicky Villanueva
145 Beaconsfield Ave.
Toronto, ON M6J 3J5

Don Wells
31 Haddon Ave. S.
Hamilton, ON L8S 1X5

Registered, but didn't attend

Eleanor Douglas
Primate's World Relief and Development Fund
600 Jarvis Street.
Toronto, ON M4Y 2J6

Moira Hutchison
Steelworkers Humanity Fund
234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 700
Toronto, ON M4P 1K7

Sarah Shantal
UFCW
151 Stanley Ave.
Etobicoke, ON M8V 1N8